

MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY AND FRIENDS:

The religious belief of the American Indian did not permit ruthless slaughter of animals or birds. Indians would not destroy life unless their food, clothing or ceremonial requirements made such a course necessary. Ruthless slaughter was unheard of and societies for the protection of bird life were unnecessary.

How was this doctrine inculcated in the young? Indian folk-lore furnishes many stories which were told with the obvious purpose of influencing the young Indian braves to refrain from the ruthless slaughter of birds. A Winnebago story which illustrates my statement is as follows:

"Once, long ago, when the Winnebagoes were all living in Wisconsin, a young brave, member of the tribe, took to fasting, as they were all encouraged to do in those days, that he might receive a blessing from some spirit. Finally this man was blessed by the Bird Manitou, and empowered to kill all the ducks and geese he wished. After a time, early one spring, while anxiously waiting for the geese and ducks to arrive, he began to make remarks, saying that he was hungry for fowls and wished that the ducks and geese would come that he might have his fill of them. Again, one day, he said: 'I am getting so hungry for ducks that, as soon as they come, I will kill a lot of them and bathe in duck's grease before I eat any.'

Finally the geese and ducks began to arrive from the south and in a day or two the very heavens were black with them. It was then that this young man took his bow and arrows and went to a favored spot to shoot ducks. Although they were so thick

they seemed to be everywhere, still he was unable to kill any; so thus he sat all day long, going home in the evening without a single duck or goose.

For four days he had the same poor luck. On the evening of the fourth day, thinking that the Bird Manitou had forgotten his blessing to him, he began to sing thus: 'It is I, it is I.' And even while he was singing, he thought he heard something. He listened and away in the distance, appeared a flock of geese flying in a V formation and the leader of the flock was singing the same song that he sang: 'It is I, it is I, the blue above my body is. It is I' Meaning that his body was like the blue sky. So thus he sang and the flock came towards the man, on and on, until they were only a few feet above him, when the Indian took up his bow and arrow and shot at the goose, saying: 'We will see whether it is you or not' But his arrow went through space into the air, and he went home without any game.

That night the spirits came and took him, in the spirit, to the upper regions, to the home of the Bird Manitou. There he was reprimanded for the way he had talked about them—of how he had said that he would bathe in their grease, etc. They told him that they had blessed him with themselves to be used as food when he needed it, but not to waste or play with, and with this advice, he was sent home, after being told to be careful how he talked, in the future.

The next morning he went out early, and in a short time, he brought home all the birds he needed as food."

Dr. Gilmore tells the story of the Omaha Indian children who found a fledgling meadowlark, not yet able to fly. They took the bird to their father who told them something of its life and habits, its nesting and home